Transcript

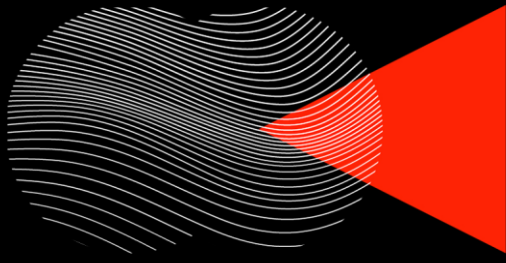## The Leadership panel session - 26 Sept 2023

DR KUMI DE SILVA

Okay, hello, good afternoon and we're very warm welcome to all of you. My name is Kumi de Silva, and I'm the Gender Equity Programs Manager at the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion.

First, I want to acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of First Nations people. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of this land where university of UTS is, City campus now stands. I would like to pay my respects to elder's past and present and acknowledge them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for this land. And I would like to also acknowledge any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here with us today.

So, thank you for coming to this panel event, which we are hosting as part of global goals month at UTS. And it's host co hosted by the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion, and the Multicultural Women's Network. If you don't know about the multicultural Women's Network here at UTS, come and see me afterwards and Leah as well. And we can tell you a little bit more of how you can join as a member or even as an ally.

So, let's set the scene for today's event. We know that too. Women are underrepresented in key decision-making roles in almost all industries in the Australian workforce. And we know this because government agencies collect data for women and report on it. However, there is a gap information in information for other intersecting identities, including that for non-binary individuals. So, what else does the data tell us? So, we know that women take up about half of all employees, but only 19% of CEOs are women. Only 32% in key managerial roles are women. If we take another cut at this, if we look at board directors, only 5.6% of board directors are women from culturally diverse backgrounds. And then, of course, there's the gender pay gap. Currently, this sits at 13%, which seems like a pretty nice number. But this number is only for full time employees. So, if we add data for all employees, so part time casual workers, and we include payment, other payments, like superannuation and other bonuses, it goes a tiny bit higher. So, then the gender pay gap is that 23% And in STEM, because this movie does focus on STEM, in STEM, the base gender pay gap, so for full time employees is that 17%. And then in addition to this, we know that 43% of women in STEM, who take parental leave, do not work full time anymore. So, today's film

screening and panel discussion will reflect on some of these issues, as well as systemic barriers to diversity of women in leadership.

So, it is my very great pleasure to welcome three wonderful UTS leaders to the stage for our discussion today.

In the middle is Professor Peta Wyeth, who is the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and IT at UTS. She's a computer science researcher internationally recognized in the field of human computer interaction, employing techniques from interaction and experience design, computer science, psychology and sociology in the design of education and entertainment technology. Previously, she was Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Science at the Queensland University of Technology. Welcome, Peta.

Under the far end to me, we have Associate Professor Ramona Vijeyarasa, who is a legal academic and women's rights activist. She's the Chief Investigator behind the gender legislative index, a tool designed to promote the enactment of legislation that works more effectively to improve women's lives. Ramona has academic career as a scholar of gender and the law follows 10 years in international human rights law Tourism, which has informed her impact driven approach to research. Welcome Ramona.

And at this end of the panel, we have Associate Professor Eva Cheng, who is the Acting Head of School of professional practice and leadership at UTS. Previously, she was the Director of Transnational education, and Director of Women in Engineering and IT with a background in telecommunications engineering, Eva actively collaboration collaborates on social justice and community engagement across stem diversity and Humanitarian Engineering. Welcome, Eva.
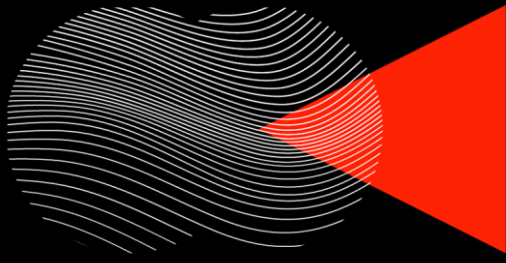
So just to start off the discussion, I'm going to ask each one of you what your style of leadership is, and whether you think your identity has influenced it in any way. Peta, we might start with you.

PROFESSOR PETA WYETH
Thanks. So, I think my leadership style I kind of articulated as collaborative, my approach is to be open to make sure that all of our conversations are transparent. I, I've done enough leadership coaching to realize my my strengths and weaknesses haven't quite addressed all of those weaknesses. But I recognize that I'm a passionate relationship builder.

So, the way that I work with the faculty and being relatively new to the faculty is to work to understand all of the people in the leadership team, and to give them the autonomy to lead in their own rights. So, it's about building the relationships, building the trust, I kind of I articulated as tight, loose, tight. So, and I'll explain that.

So, I think what, what you need to do as a, as a leader is to work with your team to create a shared vision, where are you going? What are you trying to achieve? And you do that together. And it's a tight process where everyone's taken on the journey. And then once you do that, it's loose, you

give everyone permission to lead, and to take responsibility, because we're all working in the same, you know, we're heading in the same direction. And then it's time we come back and we go, how are we going? are we achieving our goals? Are there things that we need to be doing? And once again, we do that together?

And I think the part of the question about does my upbringing or does, I guess my disciplinary background? Do you? You mentioned I'm a, I work in Chem human computer interaction. I have some background in psychology. From a time when I studied arts and didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up, and did some education, subjects as well. So, I think for me, the thing about HCI human computer interaction, it's about understanding who you're designing for, and, and to be collaborative in that design process. We know that the best designs come from when we talk to end users when we understand what they're trying to achieve. And we work together.

So, I think so I've been lucky that my research, discipline kind of kind of leads me to, I guess, be open to, to co design. And I have to say I'm working with some people and they're going up, but we won't know the answer to you. We ran a workshop recently in the faculty what's going to be the outcome? And I went, I don't know. It's going to be great. And we'll work it out together. So, I think that's really a part of what underpins my philosophy as the leader.
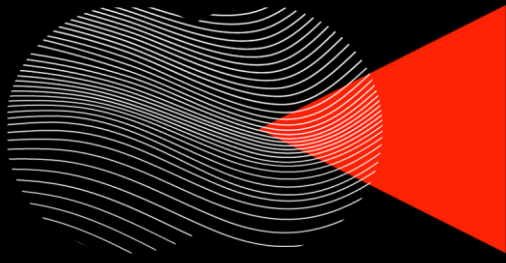
DR KUMI DE SILVA
Fantastic. I love that analogy you made of the title and state. I've read a lot about leadership, but I haven't heard that model yet. So that's really good. Ramona, what about you?

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RAMONA VIJEYARASA
Sure. Thanks, Kumi. I'll build on what Peta said around a motivating the team around a shared goal. So I had the Juris Doctor program and the faculty but as Kumi mentioned, before joining UTS, I had a decade in civil societies and activist and was a senior manager and director at various NGOs.

And when I watched the film, I remember years ago, I was at a leadership training in Tanzania when I was working for Action Aid, and it was the leaders of Action Aid, green piece, Amnesty International and Oxfam in a room and what I realized is what each organization considered a leader was vastly different. So Greenpeace felt a leader was no Anyone who literally hanging off a boat in protest, you know hanging off the mast in protest to climate destruction. And for action eight, it was very much any activist who would give their life to activism, you had to wear it in your heart.

And I think I've always worked for organizations that very much aligned with my goal, I'm 100% 110% committed to gender equality. And I fight for that. And I'm very motivated by that. But it also struck me when I had had my first daughter, and after six months of maternity leave was told when I was living in Brussels, or next week, you need to be at a meeting in Bangkok. And I was still breastfeeding, and I started pumping milk and thinking, Oh, my gosh, how am I gonna go to Bangkok? Until I said, No way, I'm going to postpone going back to work. And so I think, you know,

it really struck me that no matter how motivated you are, not everybody will have the same degree of commitment around you at the same time.

And so I think it's important for me, as I needed to motivate the team to be conscious that everybody's level of commitment and engagement and way of living that gender equality dream will be different. So, I hope I tried to be the kind of leader that finds a balance between motivating and respecting that everybody has a different level of energy and commitment to give.

And if I can add when the, the supervisor of the albatross researcher said, you know, when I team email, when I email my team at 10 o'clock at night, and within 30 minutes, I get a reply from everyone. He used this euphemism, you know, science is a mindset, and it sounds so good. Well, wellbeing is a mindset and balance is a mindset. And, and I think you can use this euphemistic language really loosely, to hide the fact that your expectations aren't going to be shared. And you need to be really conscious as the leader that not everybody is going to want to be in the team in the same way.
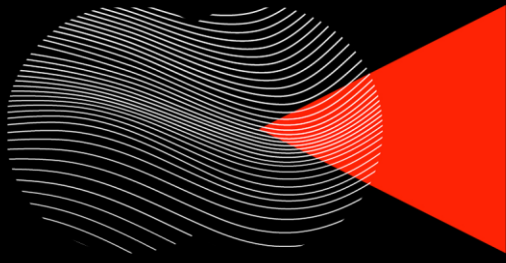
DR KUMI DE SILVA
Absolutely. Thank you, Ramona. And we're going to talk a little bit more in more detail about those differences between traditional leaders. And you know, what we can aspire to as well, Eva?

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR EVA CHENG
Yeah, interestingly, I'm actually possibly a combination of you both by pure accident. So just reflecting on the human centered design, or human computer interaction sounds very similar to human centered design, which is kind of Yeah, where I draw how I lead because I teach into Humanitarian Engineering. And it's all about human centered technology design, which is participatory, it's collaborative. So that's what I take to my leadership is to collaborate to kind of shared decision making be very transparent, involve people and listen, and I can see team members in the audience, so they can call me out if they're like, actually, that's not happening. So definitely that approach.

But also, I think that comes from my background. So, you mentioned the identity. So, I reflect that I am Australian, Chinese, when we made decisions in the family, it was super consultative and very collaborative. Anything from what are we eating for dinner? To where are you going to uni? Why are you going there? Why are you doing a PhD, like that was all a family level decision. I'm not talking just parents, it was brothers, I've got one brother, parents, grandparents in Hong Kong and Australia, like it was very collaborative. So, I think that's also influenced how I lead today.

The other angle to my leadership is I'm also very values driven. So, I come from also a social justice, maybe not activist, but certainly a passion for, I guess, equality, fairness, and, you know, equal access to opportunity for all.So,o I embed that into the way that I lead.So,o in what I'm doing, I actually being just to all of our people. And in terms of leading, it's not just our staff, it's also our students, because they're also another large member of our community. Well, primary actually, yeah.

DR KUMI DE SILVA

Fantastic. Thank you. And I knew that of course, you know, because you were a combination of the two, I kept you till the law. So just taking a sideways tip and thinking about some of the things that the movie showed, one of the themes was this idea that the women had that they were not very good, right, this imposter syndrome.

So, I heard about imposter syndrome about actually about 25 years ago, from a very senior science academic. And he put it in the context of, you know, I'm just waiting to find out that someone will tell me that my science is wrong, that my theory is all wrong. And if you remember how the pandemic unfolded, science changed in real time. And, you know, scientists were quite amazed at what was true one day, it was not true the next day.

So, but now I think impostor syndrome has become a kind of label that we use to put on women as being another thing that needs to be fixed about you. How do you cope with that? Or do you have strategies that you use to overcome on this. Who wants to go first?

PROFESSOR PETA WYETH
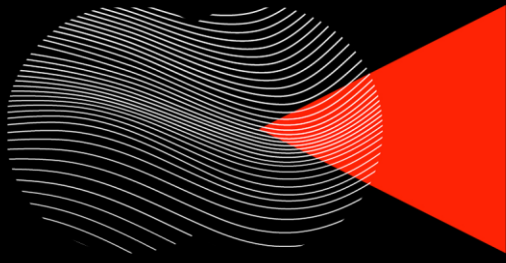
Hello, I went first last time,

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR EVA CHENG

I'm happy to start, um, I've got two kinds of responses to this one is, you are good enough. So, post it notes if you need to, I have done that just to remind yourself. And you are here for a reason, right? You don't have to justify yourself, you don't have to do extra work. You are here because you deserve to be here, and you've earned your way here. So that's Response number one.

Response number two is, it's a long-standing problem. Because over time, it's the way we've been socialized. And it hadn't happened to everybody. But you know, some women have been told from a very long time ago, you are not good enough. Not smart. Well, not pretty enough, not thin enough, too thin or too fruity or too smart. Not like it's just kind of compounded over time. So, when you get to the workforce, then that can come out in different ways. So that for me is then women don't need to do anything to combat imposter syndrome, because it's not you. It's actually the system and the structures around us that need to change. And we really need to shift away from needing to fix women, because it's not actually the women and non-binary people. Thank you.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RAMONA VIJEYARASA

Sure, I'm happy to to go and just build on those excellent points that I wholeheartedly agree with. I think the first thing I'd say is, and this might be a bit controversial, but if you don't feel discomfort, if you have all the answers, then you need another job. And I think that we need to feel uncomfortable all the time to know that we're striving for something more that there's unanswered parts of what we do that there's challenges ahead of us. So, I think a little bit of discomfort, we should start to own that as a good thing that we're there's uncertainties that that drive and motivate us.

I have two research projects right now funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade one in Sri Lanka, in Indonesia and the other in Vietnam. And they're all about women's leadership and the pipeline. And in both of those projects, so much of the emphasis is about solidarity among women and mentorship. So, I think we need to take some of those lessons into our own lives. And to me conversations about impostor syndrome have to be had in those kinds of environments. With a mentor with a P, where you can say to someone in an honest way, I don't feel ready enough for what I'm about to do, how can I feel ready to get ready. What I don't think is that we should be having those kinds of imposter syndrome conversations in really public spaces. When we're receiving an award, the number of times I've seen women stand up and say, Oh, I feel so unworthy of this award. There are so many better recipients in the audience. And to me, that just tells the judgement panel, we picked the wrong person. You know, Don't set yourself up that way. I don't think that's the place for those conversations. But I think solidarity among women and safe spaces around women mentorship, where you're having a constructive conversation, is when you want to talk about impostor syndrome, and how can you work and be helped and supported to overcome that, that sense of uncertainty and insecurity?
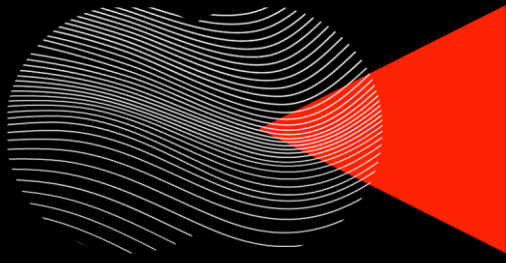
DR KUMI DE SILVA
Did you want to add to that, Peta?

PROFESSOR PETA WYETH
I will just quickly sort of tucked to the point of solidarity. I think it's and you know, it's in my notes, it's it's talked to others. And I think I was reflecting on a time because I think it's it is through all of our sort of, I guess, our culture and the messages we're getting, but sometimes it's more direct than that. So I don't know how many other women in the audience have been, you know, I was in a situation where I was told that the only reason I got a position was because I was a woman by a male colleague. And, you know, when you in that position, you go, "Ah, I, you know, Oh, really? Are people saying that, and how many people are saying it, or thinking it" and then you don't, you know, you start to second guess yourself. And the way that I sort of processed that and got through that was to, to talk to friends and colleagues who I worked with who in those safe spaces who reinforced that actually, I was the best person for the job. I deserved that position. It was going to take me out of my comfort zone a bit. But I was ready for that. And that was the reason that I applied for it in the first place.

So, I think there's that peace around solidarity, I think it's also I think, and I you know, when we think about our allies and who our allies are, I think, talking to men and talking to women, we have also recognized that while it's framed as a gendered response and that idea of imposter syndrome many People in our population, men, women, non-binary, and so on, feel uncomfortable. And actually, it's a problem for all of us, as we're, you know, I guess, stretching ourselves and there will always be those moments of doubt. And so having the people around you that you can talk to whether they're their male colleagues or women in your network is really important.

DR KUMI DE SILVA

Yeah, I wholeheartedly agree with that. Yeah, having those trusted friends that you can have a little wins and a cry to sometimes and they will lift you up, that is important to…

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR EVA CHENG
add one yes thing, just on the back of that I think something that we probably could do more of, if we feel safe, too, is actually talk to your managers about how you feel. Because if they don't know, then they may not be able, they may not be able to make the changes, that would actually impact everybody. And I say this, and Peta is my manager, something I've not done in the past, but reflecting that that could actually help.

DR KUMI DE SILVA
Yeah, I think that's really good. And then you need that kind of collaborative leadership model that you talked about Peta, where you create that psychological safety, so that people can come to you and say, Hey, I'm feeling a bit vulnerable. Because otherwise, the last thing you want to do is to go to your line manager and saying, Hey, I don't think I can do this. So, I'm feeling a bit scared about the project.
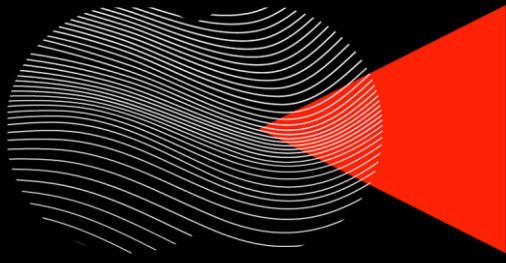
PROFESSOR PETA WYETH
Yes. And just another quick anecdote. It doesn't necessarily have to be a manager, I was thinking about my executive officer, I was writing an email, it was to all of the faculty, I send it to her and I said, Is this good enough? Or does this and she went, you know that, you know, you don't need to ask me that question. It's a great email. And so, I think a lot of people in your network can be talking to you. I think, once they know that you're open to those conversations is is important, and that you're ready for those. And that's, I guess, an individual choice for everyone that we need to recognize as well.

DR KUMI DE SILVA
Yeah. So I'm going to pull on that thread of allies and supporters and ask them this question. So again, in the film, you know, there was this statement that one of the participants made that it's not that the women need to be fixed, right, we need there are cultural and social issues that need to be sorted out as well. So how can allies help them in achieving helping us achieve gender equality, and ensuring that our workplaces are safe? Ramon, I'ma throw that to you.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RAMONA VIJEYARASA
Well, I think if I can start with the structural question, I mean, I think there's, there's a lot of structural things that need to be done. And one of the points that it was Meredith Nash, in particular, who makes his the sociologist in the team, on the boat, says, We need quotas. And we need to recognize that whiteness breeds whiteness in leadership. And I think, you know, I come from a faculty that I feel extremely supported in. And it's a wonderful faculty, and we are having conversations around our lack of cultural diversity, because I'm one of, you know, a handful of people who would openly say they recognize they identify as a person of color. And so we have a

huge diversity issue on our faculty, it's massive. And our students don't necessarily feel represented in the faculty, which is also a problem because we want them to be able to see what they want to be common. They want to feel that they can see themselves in leadership as well. And so I think, in terms of what others other allies can do, there's a there's certainly a question around being open to those conversations, because they're very difficult conversations to have.

And then I'd say the in terms of the structural change there, in one part in the film, they talk about quotas. And I think, you know, quotas in Australia, generally, in the culture and politics and corporate boards. It's such a dirty concept, and yet it's been used so successfully in other contexts when designed well. And if you don't want to talk about quotas, you can talk about targets, but you need something measurable, and you need to be accountable, to create transparency. And even if you don't meet those targets, it reminds everyone that that was a common goal, that there was a common vision. And I think that's, that's something structural that really can make a difference in this space.
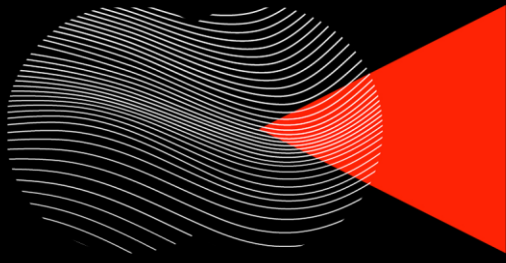

PROFESSOR PETA WYETH
Okay, so adding to that, and I think that point is excellent around, really how we work together with our allies on structural change and the realities. And I'm thinking about my previous fellow faculty where the Dean was a man, and he was a fantastic ally. And one of the things that I recognized was his commitment to structural change, but also, it's so it was really framed in terms of not just talking about cultural change or other what might be intangible things. It was actually him putting money on the table.

So, I'm just going to get it out there and sort of talk about how we support initiatives through financial The need to get to quotas has a cost to it. And I think that companies need to recognize that and I was fortunate enough to, to be at a business leaders forum where this was talked about in the energy industry. And the amazing CEO who was a woman was saying, you know, we committed to it, and we funded it. When you're thinking about supporting women on leave, not just with the sort of standard packages and what additional support you might find or any person on parental leave. What can we do? What does that support look like? And recognizing that there's a cost to it, I think is important as well.

And so how we start to have those conversations at a university perspective, but also recognizing our influence out into industry as we're talking to industry partners, they're in the STEM disciplines. They're very interested in their own quotas. And, you know, how do we help to, to create, because one of the things that worries me is that we're sending women out to places that aren't completely committed to creating a good environment. So how do we have that conversation with them?

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR EVA CHENG
Yeah, I think university is still in a really interesting place of the nexus between the schools and industries. And can this inclusive culture continue? Because otherwise we are doing the students a

disservice. A slightly different thought I had about allies was to think through what it is the change that you want to make as an ally, and just building your own awareness and education?

First, because there's a lot of information out there rather than asking the underserved or underrepresented groups, because they have to tell people so many times over, let's not add to that. And then to also maybe listen, so speak to the people around you what is it that they need? What's the resourcing this the support, the mentoring, the sponsorship, the representation from when they're not there? And then identifying what's within your realm of control? And then yeah, the action?

DR KUMI DE SILVA

Yeah, great, Google is an amazing resource that we should all use more often. So, again, I'm going to quote from the film and say, studies have shown that diversity in all its variety, including class and age, and gender, helps an organization be more productive and innovative and creative.

So, universities in Australia are very good at having a fairly diverse workforce, but it gets less and less so as you go up the hierarchy into the executive levels. So, what can we do to create more non traditional roles in leadership, where we can really explore having a diverse cohort of leaders as well? How do we get there?

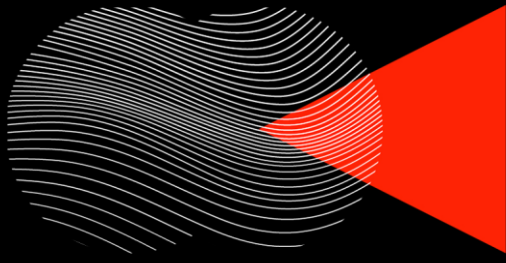If you answer this question, I'll be out of a job.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RAMONA VIJEYARASA

I suppose I would start maybe by challenging the question, which means you're not yet out of a job, which is, what we want to see is a diversity in the leadership in whatever form that is, whether it's the leadership roles we have now, or a different set of leadership roles.

So, I wrote a book called a woman president, which was about the difference women presidents make on the lives of fellow women. And part of the book I talked about pulling people up the ladder. And I And if I just focus on the absence of women in certain leadership roles and gender diverse people, I think it's important when you make it, that you pull people up the ladder. And I don't think there's enough of that.

And so, if you look at women presidents, I don't think there's enough of women presidents pulling other women up the leader, whether that's in politics, or other spaces within government and the bureaucracy. And so, I think when people who are on the marginalized and make it it's important to extend and it's, it's simply pay it forward.

So, I'm not sure we necessarily want to be saying, Oh, well, we couldn't make it into the leadership roles we have. Now, let's create a different set of leadership roles where we want to see a diversity in the leadership roles that we think organizations have and need. And I'd like to see that sort of diversity, which I think is about supporting mentorship, offering advice, putting people's putting

people's names forward, that you think would be overlooked, but would be great for particular positions. How I think that's, you know, really essential.

DR KUMI DE SILVA
But do you do you think that so when I said non traditional roles of leadership, I was trying to think back to a and sort of more collaborative models of leadership, or job sharing as senior executive positions where, you know, people might not be able to take that full time role for whatever reason. Are those kind of the out of box things that we might need to look at? But, you know,

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RAMONA VIJEYARASA
Look, I mean, I definitely think workplaces need to be more flexible. And and what I suppose is interesting across these panels is the kind of workforces We in law are sending our students into are unfortunately, not that different than engineers are sending their students into what I was mentioning before how much I think structural change needs to happen, I think there's also a huge role of individuals.

And I look back to some of my early corporate law roles, I started in corporate law. And I think, at the time I when I saw sexual harassment, or experienced harassment, and I saw bullying, being so early in my career, you almost don't even know how to identify what's happening around you. And I look back and I think, well, there were senior leaders, men and women who knew 100%, they knew this was happening. And they didn't say anything.

And so yes, I want to see more flexibility in the workplace, I want to see co sharing of jobs. But I think there's a bigger issue here around the leaders that are not calling out what's happening in front of them. And that hasn't changed enough. So, I think those bigger systemic issues need to be addressed. And that will make a more fundamental difference to a vast majority of people in the organization than some of the other practices that I hope are there and need to be sustained. But it's the calling out among leaders who don't need to because it's not going to benefit them, but should be if they're true leaders that I think really is what's the sort of organizational change we need to see.
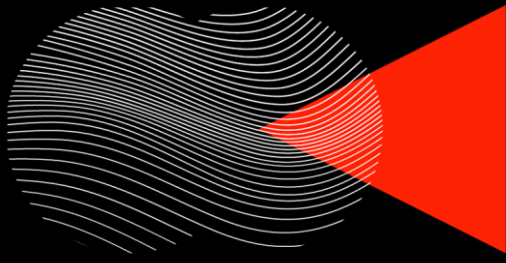
DR KUMI DE SILVA
Fantastic, thank you.

PROFESSOR PETA WYETH
And I was thinking about a quote that I came across recently that doesn't really answer your question, but I'm hoping it might get us to some point, which is, you know, we hear that phrase, you can't be what you can't see.

And we recognize that that's an important kind of position where we need to see diversity in our leaders, and we need to recognize that we can also be there. But in this particular article, it was arguing that it kind of, you know, I reflect on my own leadership. And I would say that sort of, I guess, being a woman in STEM, in some ways, I'm blind to how few of us there are. And I guess,

when I saw the end of the movie, where she kind of said, Damn, I'm leading, like a man, you know, or something like that. It kind of resonates to some extent, because you sort of grow up in a certain way. And I think, when I look at the youth around me, and the quote, in this particular article was you can't be what you can't dream, right?

So, shifting that narrative to sort of say, Yes, you need to see role models around you. But let's actually, you know, talk to those role models and say, You don't have to be like me, and I think you made the point, every leader is different. And actually, when you're asking, what would work, let's ask the, the, the young women in the audience, what they would want, as a leadership role, how they would want to shape leadership and what it would mean for them. And I think it's that giving everyone permission to dream about being a leader in the way that resonates with them that, you know, suits their background that, you know, aligns with their strengths. It doesn't have to be, you know, put in the box of, I'm competitive.

And I can say no, when it's, you know, or anything else. I'm carrying and soft or anything in between all of those two kinds of ends of the spectrum. So, I think having that conversation and saying, Well, what do you how do you want to frame leadership and giving permission and the leaders around in an institution giving people permission to do that?

DR KUMI DE SILVA
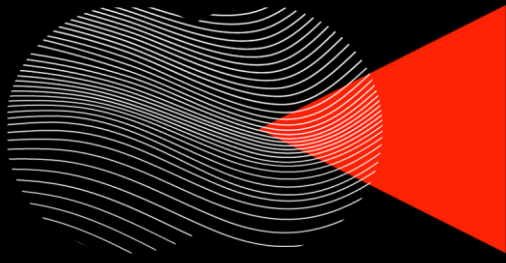Yeah, absolutely. Either. Any last thoughts around that?

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR EVA CHENG
I mean, lots of points covered. The only thing I can think of is just reflecting on what Peta's just said, with our own institution, just asking our people, what kind of leadership do they need and want to see, and then being ranked flexible into the animal called the market, but potential leaders whether internal or external, on what would work for them, rather than setting a very fixed we're looking for this, this, this and this, and if you know what's unwritten is if you don't fit this, then it's not for you. But that's not what we're trying to convey. But that might be what's perceived. And something else I'm reflecting on is the bringing, like the students going into industry for the inclusive cultures is let's have a look at our own leadership culture. Is there anything we need to change there before we encourage more Well diversity into leadership, and then having them, you know, not having a great experience. And that's when you'll see issues. Sorry.

DR KUMI DE SILVA
Thank you. I think that's, that's a great wrap up to our panel. Here. We might have just looking at my clock there, and we're heading into the break very soon. So are there any questions from the audience? And layer? We've got a microphone, let's get a microphone up here, if anyone with us.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

Thank you. So, I just have a question. And then they came up in the movie, and I think this is what is a failure, we were the way she was trying to get at is this concept of self-leadership, this concept of our own being conscious of our own prejudice, of our own story of, you know, just quickly a story around that I remember hearing a TED talk or was as a woman of color. She was an Olympian. And she was watching one of the US politicians being, you know, come into parliament, and she said her who was a woman of color, and she said, her three-year-old daughter, see, darling, now you can do whatever you want in the world. And her daughter turned to her and said, Mommy, why couldn't I before? And that's her putting her prejudice onto others.

So, I wondered how we can take responsibility for our own story for our own leadership? How can we make sure that we are showing up as our best selves to then lead others, and what your experience is in that? Thank you.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RAMONA VIJEYARASA
Sure, I'm happy to go first. And it's very personal. But you know, one of the things I was reflecting on coming here is the need of the leader to acknowledge when you've made a mistake, and to do it quickly and authentically. And so, I got to the end of the film, and I was watching Fabian there. And she does really, I mean, it's so many moments in the film, where you just need to take a step back and process what's happening. But I think she does try to process that, who she reflect on who she was, as a leader on the first voyage to where she gets.
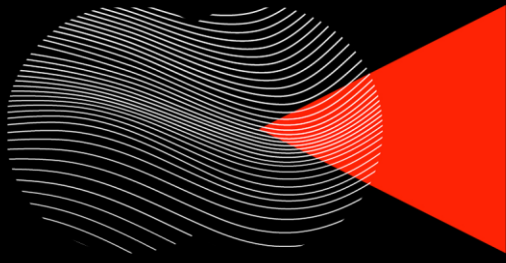
And I personally think I, I tried to do that as often as possible. So, I can give you an irrelevant example, in academia, in the faculty, in one of our research groups, we're inviting external people to lunch, who worked in our field to expand our networks. And I later reflected, I thought, I don't think I picked the right person, because I could have extended that offer to someone who's less likely to be invited, who doesn't have those opportunities, who needs that step up in the network.

And I sit on the board of a journal, and we get submissions from people to edit special issues. And one of the things I said and feedback to this excellent proposal, which was very solid, but had a long list of potential contributors. At the end, it contributed to just associate professors and professors. And there's hardly any cultural diversity among the list. So, the feedback was to say, Well, why don't you invite some early career researchers to be part of your special issue? And why don't we look a bit beyond to get a bit more cultural diversity among the contributors? So, I suppose I took my own mistake. And I tried to feed it back to these to these colleagues through the journal board role. But I think there's there's a real need to acknowledge mistakes quickly. In my own personal leadership growth.

DR KUMI DE SILVA
Yeah, no, that's, that's a very good, very good point. And that, that awareness that you had, is then reflected in how you..

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RAMONA VIJEYARASA

Then if I can tell you, I think it also reminds us that there's always something we can all do it as academics, we can always be looking beyond to try to change.

PROFESSOR PETA WYETH
And just adding on that I think, you can try to come you know, and I think our values drive our behavior and recognizing those values is important and understanding when you might have biases. And, but I think you also need to forgive yourself, you can't always be the best person and the best leader and you, you know, you might walk out of a meeting and think, Oh, I could, you know, maybe there were different ways I could have approached that and you just learn from it. And sometimes you may make the same Well, I don't know if it's a mistake, but you might need some time to, to work through that. And I think coming back to that idea of imposter syndrome, we can't be our worst critics. We need to recognize that sometimes things happen that we can control and perhaps we could have think thought things through differently. But you know, hindsight is great right? So, we just need to forgive ourselves.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2
Have you given we teach leadership here you just all the different degrees depend on whichever degree you are you teach. We teach leadership skills. How are we going to basically go out to hold of Australia and say what you're doing is wrong, especially those in the upper echelons of power? How do we know that not many we they don't choose women, when there's a choice, they always go for men? And how do we, as a university, tackle that problem?

It's a huge problem, even, even in primary in high schools and primary schools, that still, you can that you can still see those select selections of people. In those fields, even though majority of people that work in those areas are women, men are still unconsciously being selected to key leadership positions. And you when you look at the people within those areas, a lot of the women there are highly, you know, they would like, like, wipe the slate for the people, the men that's been selected.
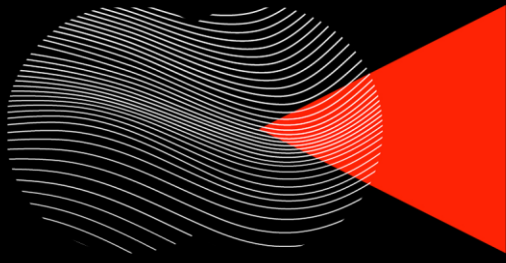
So, how do we as a university or staff members, change the culture out there? I mean, how are we going to do it? I mean, the people that don't come to learn about leadership here at UTS, are the ones who will change anyway, how do we get the rest of the of the world of Australia at least to make that change?

DR KUMI DE SILVA
I think that's a huge question. But I think we can only be an example of how to do things well, and if we train our people well, but I don't want to answer on behalf of the panel with you.

PROFESSOR PETA WYETH
I'm, I'm a big fan of professional development, I think that we all have the opportunity to grow and to to learn, I think what I've experienced as a leader is that there's a lot of goodwill out there, there are people and allies who recognize this problem and want to change and some of that behavior is unconscious, and we need to, to work to address it.

And I think what I think is well as in, in that professional development, and I think the narrative around leadership is broadening out, it recognizes through things like 360s, that, that there are different qualities to leadership. And actually, what you want to do as a leadership team is to understand your own qualities to understand those around you, and everyone works to their strengths. And once you have a kind of self-awareness

like that, I think it helps to, to, to raise the conversation about, you know, where are the gaps in our leadership team? What do we need? So we're not always getting the same kind of people? So I mean, it's a it's a, I think they were talking about generational change. And it's not going to happen overnight. But we just, I think that's a key part of, you know, that movement.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RAMONA VIJEYARASA
And can I also add, I think it's important to value our power, as researchers, you know, what we research across the university across disciplines is sending the message that women are underrepresented in STEM, and the consequences is you're missing perspectives, and you're missing solid research. And we have a gender pay gap, which means that the work that women do that we would, the industries in which we dominated are devalued, and we need to change that.

And so our research is demonstrating that across faculties, and if we have the tools in hand to really engage policymakers around that, which is something we all try to do and that we want to invest in as a university. I think we shouldn't, we shouldn't we should recognize the potential. People want evidence-based research. That's what we do. That's, you know, besides teaching our students to go out and change, make those struggles themselves. Here's our other the other part of our bread and butter to produce that evidence base.
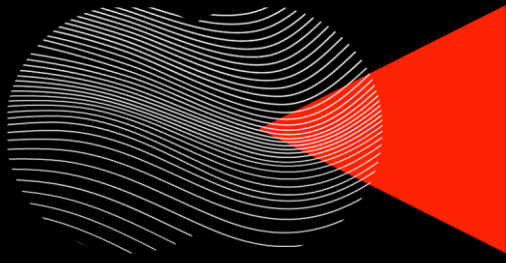
DR KUMI DE SILVA
We do need to we do need to wrap up. So, we'll take one more question from the audience.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2
Okay, so my question is, I think related to what the panel was talking first. So, it seems to me that females they bring a fresh perspective on what it means to be a leader. So, to be vulnerable, to admit mistakes to you know, be inclusive and not have an answer. And I was wondering how the process was for you to navigate in an environment, which doesn't usually have those values. And especially what I was thinking, as you have like this inclusive and more open approach, how to make sure, you know, you're still assertive, and you're still how to say strong, being soft. So, my question was around, like, how do you navigate that change? And how do you still you know, make sure that you are able to deliver things and especially when you have more of a command and control sort of culture? How do you deal with that?

DR KUMI DE SILVA
I might throw that to you, Eva?

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR EVA CHENG

Yeah, great question also, because I'm very new to being a head of school. So I'm interesting. So I think I accepted, that's the way I want to lead. And it's been kind of working with peers and understanding, okay, what's been happening here? How might we work together? So, I don't want to change the way I lead to fit into whatever the box the model is.

Because I do recognize that we are all human, right? It's not because different genders can't be collaborative. It's just maybe it's been socialized that way, maybe people expect to behave that way. But why don't we just figure out how we want to lead in the institution for the impact we want to have. So I don't know how successful my conversations with some of my colleagues here can tell me later, but it's just been understanding how can I still be me and still make the change? And then Peta can tell me later whether it's actually worked on delivering for hours as a fan to Yeah, it's not easy, but just Yeah. And if I might just say if, if it just feels like you can't, like it's just not for you, then that's a solid conversation around the culture, you know, what does need to shift here.

DR KUMI DE SILVA

Thank you, Eva. We might conclude by thanking our panel, and we can continue our conversation over refreshments just outside. So, thank you, Ramona,and Peta and Eva. It's been wonderful.